GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:304
ANSWERED ON:16.03.2000
FIRE IN PUNJAB MAIL
NARESH KUMAR PUGLIA

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether some bogies of Punjab Mail caught fire near Bhusaval railway station on February 19, 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of persons killed and injured as a result thereof;

(d) the amount of compensation given by the Government to the victims;

(e) whether any preliminary investigations have been conducted in this regard;

(f) if so, the details thereof and the responsibility fixed by the Government therefor; and

(g) the measures taken by the Government for ensuring safe railway travel ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE)

(a) to (g) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (g) OF STARRED QUESTION NO.304 BY SHRI NARESH PUGLIA & SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI, TO BE ANSWERED IN LOK SABHA ON 16.03.2000 REGARDING FIRE IN PUNJAB MAIL

(a) to (c) Yes, Sir. A fire broke out in 2137 DN Punjab Mail on 19th February, 2000 while the train was on run between Dushkhed and Savda stations on Bhusawal-Khandwa section of Central Railway's Bhusawal division. In this fire incident, 18 passengers lost their lives. In addition, one passenger suffered grievous injury and 14 passengers suffered simple injuries.

(d) Ex-gratia has been paid to next of kind of 16 deceased passengers (who have been identified) and injured passengers. Compensation will be paid to the next of the kind of the deceased and injured passengers after claims are filed in Railway Claims Tribunal and as per decrees given by the Tribunal.

(e) & (f) Yes, Sir. To enquire into the cause of this unfortunate incident, statutory investigations by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Central Circle have started on 20th February, 2000. As per the provisional findings of the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Central Circle, the fire was caused due to ignited fire source falling on an inflammable material, thus giving rise initially to the smoke and then to the fire resulting in gutting of the six coaches of the train. The exact cause of incident will be known only after the detailed report becomes available.

(g) Brief steps taken to ensure safe railway travel are as follows :-

1. Increased stress on better coordination between Railways and State Govts. For better safety and security of rail users. In this pursuit, a Joint Task Force has now been set up as a result of the meeting of the Minister of Railways with Chief Secretaries and Director General Police of States.

2. A new 'Passenger Safety Network' has been launched in December, 1999.

3. The work of track circuiting has been accelerated on the trunk routes and other important main lines.

4. Modification of the signaling circuitry is being carried out to minimize chances of human errors in causing accidents.

5. Auxiliary Warning System (AWS) for giving advance warning about 'signal at danger' to the driver of the running train has been commissioned on Mumbai suburban sections. Railway Board has cleared a pilot project of AWS for Tughlaqabad-Mathura section of Central Railway on a trial basis.

6. Walkie-Talkie sets are being supplied to Drivers and Guards of all trains.

7. There has been progressive increase in use of Tie Tamping and Ballast Cleaning machines for track maintenance.

8. For monitoring track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording cars, oscillograph cars and portable accelerometer are being progressively used.

9. In addition to the above, 2 Self Propelled Ultra Sonic Rail Testing Cars are also being procured.

10. Maintenance facilities for coaches and wagons are being modernized and upgraded at many depots.

11. To prevent cases of cold breakage of axles, ROH Depots have been equipped with ultrasonic testing equipment for detection of flaws in the axles.

12. Whistle boards/speed breakers and road signs have been provided at unmanned level crossings and visibility for drivers has been improved.

13. Audio-visual publicity campaigns to educate road users on how to make a safe crossing are conducted.

14. Steps have been taken to prevent inflammable and explosive materials from being carried in passenger trains.

15. Periodic Safety Audit of different divisions by inter- disciplinary teams from zonal headquarters has been introduced.

16. Training facilities for drivers, guards and staff connected with train operation have been modernized including use of simulators for training of drivers.

17. Refresher courses are regularly organized at specified intervals.

18. Performance of the staff connected with train operations is being constantly monitored and those found deficient are sent for appropriate training.

19. Periodical safety drives are conducted to inculcate safety consciousness among the staff.